

MODIFIED LUNGES



Lunges work the whole leg in ways that enhance both balance and gait and they are extremely versatile. Lunges can be modified for a variety of abilities and goals and can be done in just about any direction. This activity is a basic beginning lunge that emphasizes the quadriceps.

Benefits »

- ◉ Strengthens all major leg muscles.
- ◉ Provides greater balance challenge through a narrow base of support.

Set It Up »

You will not need any special equipment for this exercise.

How to Do It »

The Start

- ◉ Participants stand with good posture and appropriate balance support. They should stand behind their chair with both hands on the chair back. Get them in an offset foot position.
- ◉ One foot immediately behind the chair and flat on the floor (keeping the front knee right behind the chair will help them keep that knee over the front ankle during the lunge.)
- ◉ The other foot should take a big step (or scoot) back, as far as they comfortably can.
- ◉ Maintain a shoulder-width stance. Keep both feet aligned parallel to each other and straight (the tendency is to turn the back foot out).
- ◉ Lift the heel of the back foot off the floor.
- ◉ Feet are now parallel and straight, shoulder-width apart, one forward, one back.
- ◉ Both knees are slightly bent. This is the ready position. (Whew!)



The Moves

Use the following cues.

- Cue them that this move looks like a curtsy. It's a dipping or dunking kind of motion.
- That is, bend both knees to lower the upper body 5 to 7 inches (10 to 15 centimeters).
- Keep the torso upright, braced, quiet, and centered between both legs.
- Cue them not to lunge forward; but straight down, keeping the torso upright.
- Cue them also to keep the front knee aligned over the front ankle.
- Repeat 6 times with each leg and build up to being able to do 10 to 12 repetitions.

Take It Further »

- Increase repetitions until participants can do 15 successively with each leg.
- Do lunges more slowly.
- Add a hold, or even a small bounce, in the down position.
- Increase the lunge depth, but only if participants can maintain good form (the front knee over the arch of the front foot).

Give It More Balance »

- Add an arm lift to each dip. If the right leg is forward, lift the left arm up and overhead with each dip down.
- Switch legs more often. Work up to doing alternate legs. This is difficult, so give plenty of time for participants to make the switch and get set up to safely do the next lunge. Monitor them for form and safety.
- Lunge to standing position. Do this with your personal supervision, first. Instead of standing behind their balance support, participants stand beside a handrail or their chair. They do a shallow lunge. After the lunge, challenge them to pull back up to a standing position using mainly the front leg. This requires both strength and balance.



Keep It Safe »

Watch participants' form carefully. They will tend to lean and lunge forward and to push the forward knee out past the toes. If they are unable to correct this, or if they experience pain, stop or modify the exercise.